Dialogue With An Iconoclast

Now in his mid-seventies the former neo-nazi activist and ideologue David Myatt agreed to an interview via e-mail, having been contacted on my behalf by an intermediary. I had previously read the recent ones published as *Seven Interviews With A Modern Heretic*, [1] and did not want to go over the topics covered in them focusing instead on his translations, particularly from the texts known collectively as the Corpus Hermeticum, his works of fiction such as *Breaking The Silence Down* [2], his current spiritual outlook, and his view of the modern nation State in relation to its laws and political activity by its citizens.

The interview was conducted over several days with answers to my questions received and further questions sent, concluding one morning (his time) in late May, with Myatt agreeing to reveal the veracity of the questions and answers by publishing them on his blog under the title *One Morning In Late May*.

Egnatius Severin
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I.S. Your translations of eight tracts from the Corpus Hermeticum [3] are, if I may say so, somewhat idiosyncratic and certainly iconoclastic. The overall impression is of ancient pagan texts instead of them perceived as they are and have been as imbued with the early Christian ethos particularly with regard to the use of the term Father. Was that your intention when you began translating them?

DM: No. The intention was, as I attempted to explain in the Preface to those translations, and in various places in the commentaries, to not 'retrospectively reinterpret' the texts by avoiding English words which have, over centuries, acquired a meaning or meanings which are not or which may not be relevant to the milieu of the ancient period when what is now termed hermeticism and early Christianity existed. Thus, the common practice has been to translate νοῦς as either "intellect" or "mind", φῶς as Light, and θεός as God.

Hence why I used some transliterations, such as theos, and for example chose to translate the Greek νοῦς as perceiveration/perceiverance, and διανοίας as intuition rather than Thought. In regard to θεός, in *Notes On War, Suffering, And Personal Judgement* I wrote:

> "The numinous is θειότης, divinity-presenced, as in tractate XI v. 11 of the Corpus Hermeticum, θειότητα μίαν, and as in Plutarch, De Pythiae Oraculis, 407a, 398a-f. The numinous is essentially what is, or what manifests or can manifest or remind us of (what can reveal) that which is felt, experienced, or understood as sacred, numinal, sublime, divine, awe-inspiring, beautiful, and beyond our ability, as mortals, to control or meaningfully express through the medium of words. For Christians, it is considered to be God; for Muslims, Allah; for the Romans, divinitas; for others ancient and modern, it was and is considered to be expressible, or intimated, by mythoi and presenced in ὁ θεὸς, the deity, and/or by θεοί, the gods." [4]

To translate θεός as 'Father', without context, suggests God-The-Father familiar

from Christian traditions as in the Catholic God-The-Father, God-The Son; God-The-Holy Spirit, whereas often in the Corpus Hermeticum the context suggests another interpretation as in Tractate I verse 9,

> ὁ δὲ Νοῦς ὁ θεός, ἀρρενόθηλυς ὤν, ζωὴ καὶ φῶς ὑπάρχων, ἀπεκύησε λόγωι ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν, ὃς θεὸς τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ πνεύματος ὤν, ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτά, ἐν κύκλοις περιέχοντας τὸν αἰσθητὸν κόσμον, καὶ ἡ διοίκησις αὐτῶν εἱμαρμένη καλεῖται.
>
> "Theos, the perceiveration, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiveration, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate." [3]

This male-and-female (ἀρρενόθηλυς) deity - *the* theos, ὁ θεός - therefore cannot be the omnipotent male deity of Christian tradition nor the Trinity of Catholic tradition where the Holy Spirit is generally regarded as male not female, although there has been some dissent in recent years and some questioning in other Christian traditions.

In verse 16 of the same Tractate:

> καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα, Νοῦς ὁ ἐμός· καὶ αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐρῶ τοῦ λόγου. ὁ δὲ Ποιμάνδρης εἶπε, Τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ κεκρυμμένον μυστήριον μέχρι τῆσδε τῆς ἡμέρας. ἡ γὰρ φύσις ἐπιμιγεῖσα τῶι Ἀνθρώπωι ἤνεγκέ τι θαῦμα θαυμασιώτατον· ἔχοντος γὰρ αὐτοῦ τῆς ἁρμονίας τῶν ἑπτὰ τὴν φύσιν, οὓς ἔφην σοι ἐκ πυρὸς καὶ πνεύματος, οὐκ ἀνέμενεν ἡ φύσις, ἀλλ' εὐθὺς ἀπεκύησεν ἑπτὰ ἀνθρώπους, πρὸς τὰς φύσεις τῶν ἑπτὰ διοκητόρων, ἀρρενοθήλεας καὶ μεταρσίους.
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> <...> my perceiveration, for I also love the logos. Then Pœmandres said, this is a mysterium esoteric even to this day. For Physis, having intimately joined with the human, produced a most wondrous wonder possessed of the physis of the harmonious seven I mentioned before, of Fire and pneuma. Physis did not tarry, giving birth to seven male-and-female humans with the physis of those viziers, and ætherean.

Compare my translation with that of Copenhaver:

> And after this: ". . ., o my mind. I love the word also."
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> Poimandres said: "This is the mystery that has been kept hidden until this very day. When nature made love with the man, she bore a wonder most wondrous. In him he had the nature of the cosmic framework of the seven, who are made of fire and spirit, as I told you, and without delay nature at once gave birth to seven men, androgyne and exalted, whose natures were like those of the seven governors." [5]

The comparison does seem to make my interpretation of meaning somewhat idiosyncratic and possibly iconoclastic.

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I.S. Your translation of the Greek text attributed to Anaximander was also

iconoclastic. [6] Of significance is how you translated 'apeiron' as 'un-definitive' with accepted translations being 'infinity', the 'limitless'. Can you elaborate?

DM: The Greek text is:

> ἀρχὴ <...> τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον <...> ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσίς ἐστι τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν [Theophrastus/Simplicius]

My interpretation of meaning:

> < [the] source ... of beings is the un-definitive ...> Where beings have their origin there also they cease to exist: offering payment to balance, one to another, their unbalance for such is the arrangement of what is passing. [6]

In my commentary I explained that

> "ἄπειρον is a privation of πεῖραρ, a lack of completion; a lack of a verdict; or, often overlooked, a lack of a means, a method, an instrument, to reach a particular conclusion or of a tool do a particular task, qv. Odyssey: 3.431-435."

Hence my suggestion that what Anaximander might have implied is that the source of beings is 'un-definitive', incapable of resolution because we do not posses the tools, such as words, to resolve it. Which explains why he goes on to contrast δίκη with ἀδικία.

Which suggestion dispenses with all the metaphysical debate about 'infinity' and the 'boundless' with the remaining text simply explaining how the opposites described by denotata such as δίκη and ἀδικίαas arise and then naturally fade away.

So, yes, I would agree that to an extent my interpretation is iconoclastic.

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I.S. The only short-story that I understand you publicly acknowledged writing is *The Adventures of Hassan and Jorg* written using your Muslim name of Abdul-Aziz ibn Myatt and published on a Jordanian website. [7] Would you care to comment?

DM: It was written at the time for a young boy, the son of a Muslim friend of mine, who had an interest in the genre of Science Fiction. It was an allegory about the invasion, by NATO, of the Muslim land of Afghanistan. The saga was never completed due to other commitments. As to its possible merits or defects, that is for others to decide.

I.S. Turning now to your 1985 novella *Breaking The Silence Down*, I understand that after issuing a few copies of a new typeset edition in May of this year and placing a copy on your blog, you disowned it and deleted the blog post. [1] Why?

DM: Because after re-reading it to correct the numerous remaining typos I considered it substantially flawed in almost all respects. For example, in the

portrayal of the main character Diane with its juxtaposition of emotions and perspective; in the stereotyping, the description, by the narrator of Apthone; in the portrayal of Leonie, particularly her first physical soirée with Diane; in the way Watts was two-dimensionally portrayed; etcetera etcetera. Suffice to say my attempt to write fiction beyond a short story was an abject failure.

I.S. Why then did you initially undertake to re-typeset it and distribute a few copies?

DM: Sheer vanity. Over the decades several individuals had asked me to reproduce the original text, and approaching the twilight of my life and vaguely remembering that some passages involving Diane might (according to my geriatric remembering) be a kind of paean to classical music, to Nature and especially to the Long Mynd which at the time of writing I lived next to, I skimmed through the original text and excised the later additions and in the process corrected a few typos.

Such vanity "requires no response", for Tiresias, far wiser that I, had foresuffered all…

I.S. Was it the flawed nature of the work the reason you deleted your blog post about it?

DM: Yes.

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I.S. In many of your post-2011 writings you have stated that you have rejected politics as a means of societal change. Yet In your 2024 essay *Notes On War, Suffering, And Personal Judgement* [4] you wrote about the modern nation-State stating that empathy and a personal pathei-mathos [are] "a moral alternative to the abrogation of personal judgement and of personal conscience required by a nation-State". Isn't that a political statement?

DM: To be pedantic, by political I mean:

> "both of the following, according to context. (i) The theory and practice of governance, with governance itself founded on two fundamental assumptions; that of some minority - a government (elected or unelected), some military authority, some oligarchy, some ruling elite, some tyrannos, or some leader - having or assuming authority (and thus power and influence) over others, and with that authority being exercised over a specific geographic area or territory. (ii) The activities of those individuals or groups whose aim or whose intent is to obtain and exercise some authority or some control over - or to influence - a society or sections of a society by means which are organized and directed toward changing/reforming that society or sections of a society in accordance with a particular ideology." [8]

Therefore, in my opinion the statement you quoted is a philosophical and a personal fallible statement, not a political one. Philosophical since it concerns one of the foundations of my 'numinous way of pathei-mathos' which is the nature of causal abstractions and how they incline us or can incline us toward the personal imbalance that is hubris; which nature is that they are or can be the genesis of an

opposite or of opposites and thus of a conflict between such opposites. My view is that the nation-State is a human manufactured causal abstraction that necessitates, sometimes even demands, that its citizens accept an impersonal hierarchical chain-of-command and the abrogation of their individual judgement in favour of the judgment of some elected. or unelected. authority figure or of the consensus of some institution or authority which is considered to embody 'the will of the people' or some such manufactured political phrase or slogan.

As I wrote in the essay you referred to, it is:

> "[a] moral alternative because there is a personal, individual, horizon to both empathy and pathei-mathos so that what is beyond this horizon is something we rationally, we humbly, we morally, accept we do not yet know and have not personally experienced and so cannot judge or form a reasonable, a fair, a balanced, opinion about. For empathy and pathei-mathos live within us manifesting the always limited nature, the horizon, of our own knowledge and understanding. That it is a failure to appreciate and understand this which continues the periodical pain, trauma, injury, grief, and death inflicted on individuals."

This alternative places us as individuals into a wider perspective and which perspective often developes a certain personal humility and a feeling of why politics, of whatever description, engenders or can engender supra-personal conflict based on a manufactured dichotomy of 'us' and 'them'; of 'our' party or movement or organisation or group or faction being 'right' and of 'the others' being wrong.

This view is not something I have derived philosophically or logically from posited principles but rather from thirty years of practical involvement with politics, and latterly from practical almost decade-long involvement with a particular interpretation of a certain religion. It is thus just my personal, my fallible, view born of pathei-mathos.

I.S. But doesn't that imply a certain involvement in the world which may not strictly be political but since you have written about it in published works involves trying to change the opinions and actions of individuals?

DM: It is not an involvement in the world but rather a suggestion to withdraw from the world in certain ways; ways which do not involve obtaining and exercising "some authority or some control over - or to having influence over - a society or sections of a society by means which are organized and directed toward changing/ reforming that society or sections of a society in accordance with a particular ideology."

Essentially, in my fallible opinion, it involves concerning one's self with personal matters in the immediacy-of-the-moment by developing the art of wu-wei which I consider

> "a personal 'letting-be' deriving from a feeling, a knowing, that an essential part of wisdom is cultivation of an interior personal balance and which cultivation requires acceptance that one must work with, or employ, things according to their nature, their φύσις, for to do otherwise is incorrect, and inclines us toward, or is, being excessive – that is,

> toward the error, the unbalance, that is hubris, an error often manifest in personal arrogance, excessive personal pride, and insolence - that is, a disrespect for the numinous." [8]

Which again implies a supra-personal, a supra-terran, perspective of thousands of years: of how societies, governments, nations, Empires, and other human manufactured entities change over decades and centuries, with many if not most gradually declining and dying or being replaced. Of how they, as causal entities, are subject to and not immune from metamorphosis. A perspective which, I intuit, formed the origin of what became a spiritual way of life and thence was the foundation of most organized religions.

Thus there really is nothing new in what I have personally discovered through pathei-mathos. Perhaps only a restatement, using certain terms, of ancient wisdom as expressed by Aeschylus, that wisdom

> "often or perhaps mostly arises from within us, by virtue of that which afflicts us (and which afflictions could well be understood as from the gods/Nature or from some supra-personal source) and from our own, direct, personal, practical, experience. In contrast, the conventional religious view is that wisdom can be found in some book (especially in some religious text), or be learnt from someone considered to be an authority, or who has been appointed as some authority by some Institution, religious or otherwise." [9]

I.S. Does this attitude of 'letting-be' extend to personally ignoring or going against a law or laws of some nation?

DM: An interesting question, and it can only be a matter of personal conscience as it was for those who, for example, in the First World War, opted to be 'conscientious objectors'. The character of many governments and institutions of nation-States was and is revealed by how they deal with such people, as it was revealed in Britain during that war with most conscientious objectors subject to hatred and prejudice, with some compulsorily conscripted into the Army and given various duties on the battlefield.

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I.S. How would you classify your current spiritual outlook or orientation? Pagan, Christian, agnostic, or something else?

DM: Classify implies to me a specific category which has some kind of definition be that definition accepted by certain others, for example in academia, or be or has been the subject of some disputation academic or otherwise. My perspective now is just my personal and nameless perspective whose origin and development is a combination of reflecting on my pathei-mathos, a study of ancient Greek and Roman literature, and practical experience of religions and spiritual ways such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Taoism.

The perspective is one of appreciating the numinous, of divinity-presenced, sans words, rituals, deities, a God, and everything that involves denotata, and which presencing importantly includes Nature.

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I.S. Your translations and philosophy of pathei-mathos, and indeed your personal learning from your experiences, are mostly ignored, or more commonly, buried beneath a plethora of propaganda and allegations about you and your past continuously spread seemingly by individuals with a political agenda. Does that concern you?

DM: No, for such unproven allegations and propaganda will, as we mortals and all our manufactured abstractions and entities shall do, pass away. As it was once common to say in an Empire that has ceased to exist:

memento homo quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris
Recall, mortal, you are dust and you will revert to being dust

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1. https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/dwm-seven-interviews-v1.pdf

2. On a post on his blog this May, Myatt wrote:

> "A new edition of my 1985 novelette *Breaking The Silence Down* was publicly made available last month as a gratis pdf produced by the original author from a photocopy of the original typescript. Thus, paragraphs, sentences, and words added in the 1990s by another person, using a pseudonym, in an attempt to romanticise it for a specific purpose have been removed, as well as several typos corrected. The pdf is issued under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International license.
>
> The new pdf is available in two versions, one with standard black text on a white background, and one with green text on black background in emulation of the 'dumb terminals', one of which I used at a particular place of work in the 1970s, and it is the latter version which is provided in the URL below."

The post has since been deleted.

3. Myatt's translations and commentaries are available on his blog: https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

4. https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/dwmyatt-notes-war-suffering.pdf

5. B. Copenhaver. *Hermetica*. Cambridge University Press. 1992.

6. *Anaximander, Imbalance, And Opposites*, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-

content/uploads/2024/02/dwmyatt-anaxmander.pdf

7. https://web.archive.org/web/20040429170737/http://hassanadventures.jeeran.com/

8. *Glossary of The Philosophy of Pathei-Mathos,* https://perceiverations.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf

9. *Pathei-Mathos as Authority and Way,* https://perceiverations.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf